

# THE NEW ORDER AND ISLAM, OR THE IMBROGLIO OF FAITH AND POLITICS\*

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## 1. Islam and Power: From Accommodation to Insurrection

At 10.00 sharp, on that Monday August 20, 1984, John Naro, general chairman of the PPP United Development Party, requested president Soeharto, vice-president Umar Wirahadikusuma and their respective spouses to take their seats at the grand stand. Some 2,500 guests filled the Senayan meeting hall in Jakarta. Above the tribune, a large panel read: "The first PPP convention supports *Pancasila*." <sup>1</sup>

The national anthem, Indonesia Raya, was heard, and Mirwan Batubara, famous for his recent victory in the Kuala Lumpur Koran reading contest (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Koran*), chanted a few verses from the Book, urging the faithful to be united. Then Naro appeared.

Wearing a dark gray suit and a black *kopiah*, he was visibly in excellent form on that morning and full of self-confidence. He improvised a fluent speech that aroused cheers and laughter from the audience. Then with Soeharto's assent, he introduced the head of state to the participants, using laudatory terms: "The president is a true Muslim and a genuine *pancasila*-ist. In 1965, he saved our *Pancasila* State from chaos. . . . And Ibu Tien [Mrs Soeharto] will not disagree if I say that he is a good family man and the most handsome president in the world."<sup>2</sup>

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\* The French version of this article appeared in *Archipel* 30 (1985): 229-61.

<sup>1</sup> *Pancasila*: The Five State Principles formulated by Sukarno on June 1, 1945 are worded, under the New Order, as follows: 1. Belief in the one and only God, 2. Just and civilized humanity, 3. Unity of Indonesia, 4. Democracy wisely led by deliberations of the representatives, and 5. Social justice for the whole Indonesian people.

<sup>2</sup> Quote from *Tempo* magazine, August 25, 1984: "Ketua baru dari Ancol" [The new Chairman from Ancol]. Most current data used in this paper is drawn from *Tempo* weekly. Set up in 1971, Indonesia's top political magazine, *Tempo* is an invaluable source on the New Order and Islam. The core of its editorial board is made of members of the 1966 Generation, who took an active part in the beginnings of general Soeharto's regime. *Tempo* has been an objective mirror of the New Order's development. Under Goenawan Mohammad's leadership, *Tempo* pays sustained attention to Islamic problems. *Tempo* was banned from April 12 to June 11, 1982, for its too intensive

This official and seemingly relaxed ceremony opened the convention of PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan), the party that since 1973 has associated the various streams of Indonesia's political Islam, although its own name (United Development) bears no reference to Islam and fits well with New Order priorities. Harmony was prevalent, and allegiance was being paid by Muslim politicians to military and secular powers as well as to the Five State Principles, including the first one—Belief in the one and only God, which recognizes Indonesia's monotheist religions. However, and this is the source for various problems, no special place is given to Islam, which is professed by the majority of the population.

If the symbols of this scene are to be taken for granted, it looked as though everything was smooth between the New Order and Islam, while Muslim politicians seemed to get along well with the military and developmentalist regime born in the aftermath of the aborted September 30, 1965 coup attributed to the Communists. Such a facade of unanimity was presumably only one aspect, however real, of the relationship between the State and Muslims. In the country of shadow theater plays, while face value is often equivalent to reality, what is behind the screen of official ceremonies obviously cannot be ignored. A displayed consensus may not hide the diversity and complexity of political Islam in Indonesia's New Order.

The events that occurred in Tanjung Priok some three weeks after the PPP convention were not precisely the other side of the picture and were probably not even an expression of the political game that goes on backstage: There may not have been any direct causal link between the performance of a tamed political Islam on August 20, 1984 and Islam-influenced riots on September 12, 1984. But it can be assumed that there was a general correlation between the containment of Islam as a social political force, and the violent though limited explosion of mass and fundamentalist Islamic feelings. The contrast between a well-oiled convention and the people's furor was manifest.

The affair<sup>3</sup> started with a minor incident. On Friday September 7, 1984 in the evening, sergeant Hermanu, a *Babinsa* (*Bintara Pembina Desa*, non-commissioned officer in charge of village surveillance—a low-level New Order official), was on duty in the South Koja district in Tanjung Priok when he discovered three posters on the wall of the Assa'adah mosque. Women were urged to dress in line with Islamic decency, and wear the *jilbab* (or *kerudung*, Islamic head scarf). The sergeant took off his shoes, went into the mosque, and politely asked a few youths at prayer to remove the posters. They declined to do so. Coming back on the following day (September 8), he soaked a sheet of newspaper in the mosque gutter and dripped its black juice on the objectionable writings.

Then mass mobilization began. Inhabitants of the neighborhood gathered and rumors of desecration started to circulate: the sergeant was said to have come into the mosque without taking off his shoes. In another version, the military man had defiled the mosque with gutter water. Finally (and more serious): sergeant Hermanu was said to be Christian (he actually is a Muslim).

On September 10, with some of his friends, Achmad Sani, a leader of the Assa'adah mosque went to sergeant Hermanu to demand, to no avail, that he apologize. Asked about

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coverage of incidents during the election campaign and its breaking of the "consensus" between the government and the press.

<sup>3</sup> This story is retold from *Tempo's* report, September 22, 1984, "Huru-hara di Tanjung Priok" [Riots in Tanjung Priok]. According to another version of the starting point of the affair, writings posted on the mosque wall would have been insults against the head of state and his entourage. Beyond facts, attention here is mainly focused on mentalities and popular behavior as revealed by the situation.

his religion, Hermanu declared himself a Muslim, but was sufficiently unwary so as to mispronounce Allah's name (instead, the word *alah* was heard, which is an utterance for impatience). "Therefore he certainly is not a Muslim," stated an eye witness. A mob that had gathered and was about to hit him was prevented from doing so by Achmad Sani. As people then tried to destroy the sergeant's motorbike, the police arrived. Achmad Sani and three of his friends were arrested.

The four arrests completed the mobilization process in the neighborhood, and encouraged an informal young leader in Tanjung Priok, Amir Biki, to step in. A former 1966 New Order activist, and a former member of the anti-Sukarno student regiment Laskar Arief Rahman Hakim,<sup>4</sup> he was a devout Muslim, born in Gorontalo (North Celebes) in 1948. A businessman, he headed PT Irajaya, a small subcontractor to Pertamina. As such, he was typical of the thousands of small Muslim entrepreneurs gravitating around Indonesia's oil company, then a major knot of military bureaucratic power in the New Order, who were having trouble competing with the Chinese in international tenders. *Haji* Amir Biki derived his status as a local leader from his economic role, his piety, his past as a 1966 activist, but also from his endeavors to unite and propagate Islam (*dakwah*). He used to organize speakers to give Koranic lectures which had an anti-government tone. He was regarded as able to avoid inter-racial or inter-ethnic strife, and was sometimes asked for help in freeing lecturers or preachers (*mubalig*) who had been arrested.<sup>5</sup> That is why, on September 11, Amir Biki attempted to have the four Muslims released, but in vain.

What happened during the night of the 11th is not well documented, but it can be assumed that a lot of organizational work took place via the Islamic network, with results apparent on the following day. On September 12, a speaking stand was erected in Sindang street, while dozens of loud speakers were set up in neighboring streets. Leaflets were disseminated by Pemuda Islam Sindang (the Sindang Muslim youths) inviting local teenagers to a Koranic recitation, and to listen to lectures delivered by religious teachers (*ustad*).

The evening program was opened at eight by Amir Biki who got on the tribune. Brandishing a dagger (*badik*), the bearded *haji* started a vehement but rather mixed up diatribe against expeditious expropriations due to land speculation, against birth control, and the bill on Mass Organizations (*RUU Ormas*) that was about to oblige all organizations, including religious ones, to insert *Pancasila* into their articles of association. He was in fact attacking the government. He asked the audience to wait for his instructions and demanded the release of the four arrested Muslims. A deadline was set for the demand: at 23.00, their release should take place, or else he would call for demonstrations, which might get out of hand and turn into a bloodbath (*banjir darah*). Actually, Amir Biki phoned the officials twice, to repeat his demands. Other speakers delivered equally harsh speeches and made statements later branded by the government as "racialist," not to say anti-Chinese.

At 23.00 the detainees had not been released, and Amir Biki launched his men, allegedly as many as 1,500. He formed two columns preceded by the green standard of Islam, with most of their members armed with *celurit* (Madurese scythe-shaped knives). The rioters—should we say the insurgents?—were soon stopped by the police. Some shots were heard, Amir Biki fell; he never stood up again. His entourage believe he died as a martyr (*syahid*).

<sup>4</sup> This para-military regiment was one of the spearheads of the 1966 student movement. On that period, see my *Les étudiants indonésiens et l'Ordre Nouveau*, (1984), 352 p. In 1978 with former 1966 activists, Amir Biki took part in setting up of a study group, Fosko 66 (Forum Studi dan Komunikasi), gathering evicted New Order generals such as general Dharsono, and Muslims. The group's activities were "frozen" in 1979 by the authorities.

<sup>5</sup> Biographical data drawn from "Malam terakhir buat Amir" [Amir's last night], *Tempo*, September 22, 1984.

While retreating, the rioters set houses and cars afire. As they were about to burn down the Tanjung chemist's shop, it was said that the owner, albeit a Chinese, was a Muslim. However his shop eventually burned down because it caught fire from the next shop. Eight Chinese bodies were found afterwards in the remains. The police managed to restore order, and the following day Indonesia's three political parties—including PPP—made statements unanimously condemning the Tanjung Priok events.

What is the connection between this outburst of Muslim popular violence on the night of September 12, 1984 and the well-oiled convention of the official Muslim party three weeks before? In both cases, although under different forms and with opposite results, social political Islam entered a bipolar relationship with the same dominant partner, the New Order government. Both events must be seen in their context, which means not only recent developments but also a longer-term perspective—at least since the beginning of the New Order in 1966. A brief overview of the ups and downs in the relation between Soeharto's government and Islam for 20 odd years is thus a way to explore how the system works.

## 2. Face to Face: Armed *Priai* and Unarmed *Kiai*

There may be some difficulty in associating two basically different entities, one, the New Order, being political, whereas the other, Islam, is religious. While they respectively belong to a different realm, they combine and confront each other in a common field, which is somewhere between morals and politics. Besides, both quarrel over the same constituency, Indonesia, and the same clientele, Indonesian civil society. Most of the population (85 percent) is allegedly Muslim, and the country is regarded as an Islamic land; the New Order claims to be a political, social, economic, and cultural system applying to the society as a whole, which it means to transform, renovate, and modernize. Islam is a world view derived from a conception of the hereafter, and therefore is an ideology that envisions a social organization and a type of political order applicable to the whole *ummat* [community]. Religion is not separate from politics: Islam is holistic. It addresses all Muslims, including those who are not Muslim yet, and it regulates all ways of life: not only does it articulate the relation between Man and God, but also among men themselves.

The New Order, the province of which is the whole society, interferes with material and spiritual matters: it hopes to mould these two dimensions according to an ideology, *Pancasila*, that has been increasingly interpreted as an all-encompassing creed. It is the New Order's aim to grid and control the Indonesian space more and more closely. As a value system, it means to endow each individual with specific standards and forms of behavior, a State morality supportive of development—and of the political establishment.

Since they compete with each other, politics and religion may be associated and contrasted. Their totalizing and holistic aspects make them potentially antagonistic. Beyond the social political swamp of the silent majority—nominal Muslims and lukewarm New Order supporters—more convinced and vocal elites form the New Order's and Islam's harder cores; they are the game leaders, and they may conflict with each other. These elites can be labeled, in a short-cut, as armed *priai* and unarmed *kiai*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Priai*: Javanese upper class officials with aristocratic overtones, sometimes related to a *keraton* (palace) family. *Kiai*: Javanese title for *ulama* (Islamic scholars). By symbolically applying these Javanese terms to competing Indonesian elites, emphasis is put on the cultural and geopolitical localization of power in Java.

To be sure, each competing elite pays at least lip service to its rival's ideology or religion: the Javanese military are often Muslims, while *ulama* may have supported—many of them actually do support—general Soeharto's regime. But eventually both elites are clearly definable, distinct, and opposed in many aspects. With no excessive oversimplifying, it is convenient to view contemporary Indonesia as a bipolar system whereby *priai* New Order leaders confront Islamic *kiai*.

Both terms refer to two precolonial Javanese traditions, that of the heirs to Hindu-Javanese culture, and that of Muslim *santri*, the *pesantren* Islamic school students. The *priai* aristocrats, turned into Westernized civil servants by the Dutch, became in large numbers the leaders of modern secular parties, mainly Sukarno's Nationalist Party, and to a lesser extent of the Indonesian Communist Party. Since independence, Javanese *priai* have dominated the civil service and the armed forces. Thus, they have had long practice in power, which has been reinforced and completed under the New Order: through the Dual Function, the *priai* Army has taken over a "*priai*-zed" civil service.

Quite different is the *ulama's* inheritance, which is made of an ambiguous relationship with political power. While they felt entitled to replace the *priai*, either as power holders or at least as its inspirers, *kiai* were prevented from doing so by the Dutch colonial system. This is probably one of the reasons for their ambivalent feelings and frustration toward (secular) government. While the Islamization process was well on its way and about to generate Islamic forms of state, it was thwarted by the Europeans. The only alternative left to Muslims was to collaborate passively with the colonial government or revolt against it. Both attitudes were successively or simultaneously adopted.

The Islamic awakening early this century,<sup>7</sup> the reformist movement that gave birth to Muhammadiyah in 1912, and the resistance of Muslim entrepreneurs against Chinese economic dominance led to the emergence of modern political Islam, with the adoption of modern ways of struggle through new types of organizations. A movement also set up in 1912, Sarekat Islam, catalyzed the process, and led a successful mass mobilization drive; however it was soon deprived of its troops and supremacy by secular forces, the Communists and the nationalists. Counter-reformist groups reacted in 1926 by setting up the "Renaissance of the *Ulama*" (Nahdatul Ulama) movement.

From the late 1930s to the Japanese occupation, Islam was seemingly able to unite again. However, despite its low and cooperative profile during the Physical Revolution (1945-1949) and in the early 1950s, it was again undermined by its secular competitors. Compromised in regional rebellions, Masyumi was banned in 1960 by Sukarno and the military; other shades of political Islam were tamed, and survived through the Nahdatul Ulama and two residual parties (Perti and PSII) used as a security by Sukarno in the syncretic coalition he had conceived under the acronym *Nasakom* (Nationalism, Religion, and Communism).

For a while, the advent of the New Order was seen as a historical chance for political Islam. In the context of anti-Communist suppression (late 1965), an alliance was struck between Javanese *santri* and *ulama* landowners on one side, and the military on the other as they were willing to fight "the moral and economic decline" (*kelunturan akhlak dan ekonomi*) caused by the Sukarno years. Muslim business people from Java's north coast and the Outer

<sup>7</sup> Many a comparison could be made between the first Islamic revival and the current Muslim renewal in Indonesia. This theme is partly dealt with in my "Les musulmans Indonésiens," *Hérodote*, n° 35 (1984), "Géopolitique des Islams." Also see Harry J. Benda, "Southeast Asian Islam in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol 1, ed. P.M. Hold (1970), pp. 182-207.

Islands thought that the rehabilitation and reform program launched by the military would be beneficial to them. The more so as general Soeharto took more than one and a half years (October 1965–February 1967) to evict Sukarno, and was therefore in need of allies and legitimacy. He was prepared to accommodate political Islam, and he even let it be believed that Masyumi might be rehabilitated—which eventually was done in 1968, but at the cost of a change in name (the new party was called Partai Muslimin Indonesia or PMI) and of many concessions that would jeopardize its credibility.

Muslims were soon disappointed as they did not obtain what they expected. In the economic field, the military opted (but did they really have a choice?) for an exogenous type of development, based on a massive injection of foreign capital and technology, which impaired small-scale Muslim enterprise. Even before the 1968/69 economic upturn, Muslim business people had already become victims to the ruthless anti-inflation and monetary adjustment policies implemented by the technocrats. At a later stage they collided with the Chinese favored by the military, and even more with multinational, mainly Japanese, corporations.

As the country opened to the West, religious leaders and disturbed believers were discontented with foreign cultural penetration which they deemed to be too secular and materialistic. In 1973 for the first time, Islamic feelings came into the open in a well-organized way, when the marriage bill was discussed in parliament. The new bill modernized woman's legal status in a way seen as inappropriate to the Koranic tradition. Under pressure from the *ulama*, the government had to step back and redraft the bill.

Disappointment was even more bitter at the political level. As early as 1966, the military's preferred allies were the Christians (over-represented in the higher ranks of the civil service and actively promoting their own religions), and reformist and modernist students of the Association of Muslim Students (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam) whose leaders adhered to a more technocratic than Islamic ideology. Soon, Islam and traditional political parties were depicted as obstacles to Indonesia's development and modernization, and many official efforts were directed against them. During the first general election under the New Order in 1971, the government-backed organization Golkar won 62.8 percent of the votes, by mustering support among secular voters (including former pro-Sukarno nationalists). Political Islam had been undermined, as the four Islamic parties together only got 27.1 percent of the votes, compared to 43 percent in the 1955 general election.

In January 1973, Islamic parties ceased to exist as such and lost their identity: Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Partai Muslimin Indonesia (PMI), Perti, and PSII were merged into the Unity Development Party (PPP), whose appellation no longer contained anything Islamic. The new party was kept under the close scrutiny of the military who interfered with it until it took on the expected form and could be allowed, eleven years later, to hold its first national convention, as described above.

However, to mitigate the new Islamic aggressiveness shown in the marriage bill affair, and to face the renewed student protest that led to the Jakarta 1974 riots, the government had to appease Islamic opinion: its ideologists started to describe the New Order as a defender of the True Faith. In 1975 the government set up the Indonesian Council of *Ulama* (Majelis Ulama Indonesia), while during the 1977 election campaign, Golkar recruited many *haji*: all of this was meant to improve its relationship with *kiai*, whose only weapon was their oratory but who were not deemed to be harmless.

At this stage, the basic and symbolic dichotomy of armed *priai* facing unarmed *kiai* needs to be somewhat refined. As a matter of course, neither of these two power elites is

monolithic. Islamic elites are not limited to *ulama* and *pesantren* masters. Mention has already been made of early 20th century Islamic reformism and of its modern heirs, some of whom have joined the New Order. Beside tradition-minded *kiai* who are generally members of the Nahdatul Ulama, reformist Muslims make up a large part of Indonesian Islam. The reformist stream was once embodied in the former Masyumi party (although its base may have been more conservative than thought), then in its successor the Partai Muslimin Indonesia, and recently in the PPP faction led by John Naro. Moreover the large modernist Muhammadiyah organization is still very much alive and active in social work and education. Also witnessing to the vigor of the reformist stream were the debates held in the early 1970s on Islam and politics, on the relation between religion and the secular world, and the polemics launched by Nurcholis Madjid.<sup>8</sup> But after a short period of prominence in the early New Order period, most proponents of Islamic modernism have joined the regime, and their moderation toward the government has made them hardly visible. On the contrary, *kiai* and Nahdatul Ulama, as is shown below, seem to channel part of the Islamic malaise.

Similarly, the New Order hard core is not only made up of military *priai*. One reason for this is that the army itself has a composite origin and recruitment, and includes non-Javanese (Bataks for instance) or Javanese commoners, even though the dominant model is that of *priai*. Another reason is that by the late 1960s, when "West winds" were blowing over the Archipelago, Javanese-ness was not entirely agreeable. Some of the foremost allies of the New Order would even go so far as to be frankly hostile to Javanese culture: intellectuals, students, technocrats, urban modernist bourgeoisie, pro-Western elements from the Outer Islands would regard Javanism as an obstacle to modernization, just like traditional Islam. But after 1973/74, as the regime detected possible threats coming from the Muslim side, Western influence was more filtered, and the notion of national identity was revived. However, for the military, national specificity was dependent on the culture that historically dominated all the others, namely Javanese culture.

The "Majapahit" reflex—originating in the Javanese imperial tradition that peaked in the 14th century—would play again. Propagation of *priai* ideology as conveyed by the army, and also by the civil service was emphasized, with the blessings of the Javanese head of state. Since then, the Javanization of Indonesia and the "*priai*-ization" of government have been felt in modes and expressions of power. Such neo-traditional tendencies expressed by Javanese leaders are the counterpart for the rise of fundamentalism among Muslims: in fact, the whole society has been pervaded by a movement of relative backlash and return to "safer" values (either Javanese or Islamic). Brought about or interpreted by *priai* and *kiai* elites, this regressive tendency is a reaction to the disturbing impact of modernization and to the upheavals caused by economic growth.

Among the clearer signs of the Javanization of power, is the irresistible expansion of *Pancasila*, the State philosophy.

### 3. *Pancasila* vs the Jakarta Charter: State Management of Islam

An old dispute over the form of the State brings secularists into opposition with supporters of theocracy. On June 1, 1945, Sukarno presumed he could persuade everyone to endorse the Five Principles of the State. In typical Javanese style, he made a syncretic

<sup>8</sup> On this theme, see Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur, 1982), 250 p.

attempt to associate nationalism and belief in the one and only God, social justice, Indonesian democracy, and humanism.

However, Muslims were not satisfied with this vague wording and demanded that the future constitution make it compulsory for believers to apply Koranic law, namely *shari'at*. Such an obligation as defined in a document called the Jakarta Charter would have given the Republican State a more Islamic form of government, without transforming it into a full-fledged Islamic theocracy. But Republican legislators were not ready to accept this amendment, and the Muslim parties provisionally compromised in order to give the appearance of a united front to the outside world.<sup>9</sup> However this setback to the Muslim cause was the source of a long-standing resentment that eventually led to a rebellion against the Republican government, with the aim of setting up an Islamic State (Darul Islam, 1949-1960).

In 1967, after Sukarno's downfall, the new juncture seemed favorable for Islamic quarters to exert pressure on the New Order and obtain the enforcement of the Jakarta Charter. As the military had promised fully to apply the 1945 Constitution and *Pancasila*, Muslims contended that *shari'at* should be enforced by the government upon believers, in line with the July 5, 1959 Decree that reenacted the first constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. In fact, they misunderstood general Soeharto's intentions. Once he was firmly established as the head of state in March 1968, he discarded a few "New Order radicals" and other would-be or real rivals among the military, and continued to build a secular, Javanese-shaded state. He evolved *Pancasila* into a shield to be used against radical Islam and the political consequences of the faith revival. In 1978 the understanding of the first principle (belief in God) was extended to include mystical beliefs of the Javanese type (*kebathinan*, since 1973 officially called *kepercayaan* to conform with the first *sila*) beside monotheist religions. In March, the draft Outlines of State Policy (GBHN) that put religions (*agama*) and mysticism on a par were submitted to the People's Assembly (MPR) for approval. However, for the first time in the New Order's history, consensus in the Assembly was broken and unanimity could not be reached: The Nahdatul Ulama component of the PPP was so adamantly against the text that *voting* had to be held. Nevertheless the text was adopted.

Despite this breach of *priai* etiquette, from 1980 onwards, president Soeharto started a "*pancasila*-ization" process of public life in Indonesia, going ever further in the search for the cosmic harmony that is ideal in Javanese aristocratic culture. The first targets were civil servants who were requested to improve their knowledge of *Pancasila* by taking compulsory *Pancasila* classes based on the "Guide for Living and Practicing *Pancasila*" (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila* or P-4). Then all political forces, all social organizations, were firmly invited to explicitly and exclusively adhere to *Pancasila*: the Five Principles must be inserted into their articles of association as a sole principle (*asas tunggal*). Was the government trying to get a philosophical guarantee of loyalty to the president as the ultimate repository of *Pancasila*? Such a guarantee would seem more apparent than real, even if it bore some weight because of the strength of symbols. Was it intended to undermine the impact of religious forces, i.e. Islam, by enforcing allegiance to the *Pancasila* State? Probably so, and such was the interpretation of political Muslim forces that strongly opposed this attempt at ideological locking up. Eventually, the ultimate aim lay in the basic drive of the New Order to "de-Islamize" even more the PPP, and complete the process by which it was

<sup>9</sup> The Jakarta Charter never became the preamble of the 1945 Constitution. When Indonesia's independence was recognized by the Dutch in 1949, another constitution was enforced. On July 5, 1959, Soekarno reenacted the 1945 Constitution with the support of the military. He made a formal concession to Muslims by stipulating that the spirit—but only the spirit—of the Jakarta Charter inspired the 1945 Constitution, which had no legal effect.



deprived of its Islamic identity. Through protracted political engineering (Nahdatul Ulama under-representation), PPP was eventually made to adopt *Pancasila* as its sole principle, at its August 1984 convention. For secular and Javanese forces, adherence was never a problem—Golkar as the government party and PDI, the heir to the nationalist and Christian parties, saw *Pancasila* as a protection against feared Islamic encroachments.

Thus, the Jakarta Charter, let alone the Islamic State, seem to be a long way off. Islam does not inspire government in the least, while the *Pancasila* foundations of the State have been consolidated. But the State does not ignore religious practice, especially Islam; on the contrary it is a modern *penata agama*, it “regulates”—rules?—religion. Three recent examples illustrate how the New Order manages Islam.

The first one relates to the pilgrimage (*hajj*), which is controlled by the government, mainly through the Department of Religious Affairs. An old fiefdom of Nahdatul Ulama, the Department was purged of its politician elements by minister Mukti Ali in 1971, and by general Alamsyah Ratuprawiranegara in 1978. In March 1983, when the 4th Development Cabinet was formed, a cosmetic concession was made to Muslim opinion: a *kiai*'s son, Munawir Sjadzali, was appointed as Minister of Religious Affairs. But this former career diplomat and dedicated technocrat in fact continued the New Order policies, which sometimes seemed inspired by Snouck Hurgronje, the colonial Islamologist (1857-1936): as in older times, politics would officially be separated from religion, the former being hindered while the latter would be encouraged. In order to promote “religious” Islam, the Department controls a large part of Islamic schools, from *madrasah* (Koranic schools) to IAIN (Islamic universities). Together with other official bodies, it supervises the propagation of the faith (*dakwah*) and Friday sermons. It filters foreign aid donated to Muslims from the Middle East, and more important still, it takes care of the organization of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

In the early New Order period, it had been envisaged that the administration of the *hajj* would be liberalized, as it had just been assigned to the Department of Religious Affairs by Sukarno. At least so reformist Muslims hoped.<sup>10</sup> But the bureau which since then has become the general directorate for Islamic mass guidance and *hajj* affairs (*Ditjen bimas islam dan urusan haji*) preferred to keep its *hajj* monopoly and continued to organize the pilgrimage. The more so as Islamic unrest in the Middle East was worrying the Indonesian government. The system is cumbersome (for instance during the pilgrimage season, Indonesian passports are not valid for Saudi Arabia) and too expensive for most Indonesians who still have a low buying power: the fee per pilgrim (*Ongkos naik haji*) is above costs, since it costs Rp. 3 million in Indonesia against Rp. 2 million in Malaysia (1984). This is why “unofficial pilgrims” (*haji gelap*) are still numerous (24,000) compared to 50,000 official *haji* in 1983.<sup>11</sup>

Whether official or not, *haji* represent economically strong Islam. A cheaper and more popular way to assert one's faith is to wear a *jilbab* (women's Islamic head dress) that Islamists intend to impose on women—at least on their own spouses. To counter this fundamentalist attitude, the *Pancasila* State, through the Department of Culture and Education, did not fail to exert its administrative control, and endeavored to regulate a practice deemed to be backward. Its unfortunate efforts aroused general protest from Islamic opinion, which

<sup>10</sup> See Deliar Noer, *Administration of Islam in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1978), 82 p., especially chapter 4: “Administration of the *hajj*.”

<sup>11</sup> Most of these 24,000 clandestine *haji* were Muslims who did the small pilgrimage (*umroh*) and stayed until the *hajj* season. A new regulation (Keppres n° 63/1983) aims to control *umroh* pilgrims. See “Umroh ditata, Haji kena [Pilgrimage overhaul hits pilgrims],” *Tempo*, January 21, 1984.

reverberated as far as Tanjung Priok with its pro-*jilbab* wall writings. In March 1982, the director general for primary and secondary education (*Dirjen pendidikan dasar dan menengah*) made it mandatory for government school children of both sexes to wear a "secular" uniform, which meant a ban on *jilbab*. Until recently, female students from Islamist families would still go to school wearing a veil, which usually results in their being sent back home (*dirumahkan*).<sup>12</sup> The problem was provisionally settled through various compromises, although in the process Daoed Joesoef, the then minister of Culture and Education, lost his portfolio.

The third example showing how the *Pancasila* State regulates Islam, or rather, uses it for its own purposes, relates to a quasi official body that is coordinating the uneasy relationship between the government and the *ulama*. This body, the Indonesian Council of *Ulama* (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) banks on the influence of cooperative *kiai* to improve the government's impact on the *ummat*. Set up in 1975, the MUI originally derived some clout from the prestige of its first chairman, the reformist Hamka,<sup>13</sup> but it was soon perceived as a government tool. For example, out of four recommendations issued by the Council during its March 1984 national meeting, three undoubtedly reflected government priorities while only the last one gave satisfaction to the *ulama* as can be seen from the following:

1. *Vigilance regarding shi'ism*. Sunni Indonesians were invited to be careful about the Iranian Islamic model, while the Iranian embassy in Jakarta was accused of being a propaganda channel for shi'ism in Indonesia.

2. *Use of inherited land in Java*. The Council recommended that inherited agricultural lands not be divided, but rather, one of the following solutions be chosen: use such land in a cooperative, have it bought by a rich heir, or sell it back to a neighboring landowner. Otherwise, have a Muslim from the same village buy the land to transform it into paddy fields, with a poor-tax levied on it to be allocated to impoverished neighbors (those who could not afford to buy the land in the first place). It was suggested that landless heirs, duly compensated for giving up their landed heritage, "transmigrate" to the Outer Islands.

3. *Haji*: the pilgrimage is a duty to be fulfilled only once, and only by those who can afford it. Rather than making the pilgrimage for a second or third time—which is a costly habit among Indonesian *haji*—it would be better to give to a charity.

4. *Ahmadiyah*: the Council requested cancelation of a 1953 ruling issued by the minister of Justice as it gave official recognition to Jamaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, a brotherhood deemed to be heretic by the MUI because the Ahmadis regard their founder, Ghulam Ahmad, as a prophet.<sup>14</sup>

Despite efforts directed at them, the *Pancasila* State rather failed to attract the *ulama* who make up the main focus of potential and real opposition to the New Order, as an alternate

<sup>12</sup> "Tahun ini, batas kerudung [This year is the limit for wearing a veil]," *Tempo*, August 11, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> See Nasir Tamara, ed., *Hamka di mata hati umat* [Hamka seen by his Muslim friends], (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1983), 437 p. Since Hamka's death, MUI has been chaired by K.H. Syukri Ghozali and by K.H. E.Z. Muttaquien. Similar bodies exist for other religions recognized by the State: MAWI (Catholicism), DGI (Protestantism), Parisadha Hindu Dharma (Hindu-Balinese religion), etc.

<sup>14</sup> "Satu fatwa, empat rekomendasi [One religious edict and four recommendations]," *Tempo*, March 17, 1984. The *fatwa* dealt with adoption, a problem that recently disturbed Muslim opinion, following a number of cases whereby Indonesian children were adopted by Christian European nationals. According to MUI, adoption is a good deed (*amal saleh*), provided the religious status of the child is not modified and his blood links with his parents are recognized.

elite with a rival legitimacy. *Ulama* are in touch with Islamism which is watched by the authorities, and the religious leaders could direct and channel it, if not ignite it. They could take advantage of the current return to the roots of Islam, since more than ever they assert their title of "heirs to the Prophet" (*warasatul anbiya*).

#### 4. The "Ulama Renaissance"

One of the most visible signs of the awakening of *kiai* is the recent evolution of their political movement, Nahdatul Ulama (NU). Despite its merger with PPP, this former party with an auspicious name (rebirth of *ulama*) still works as a social religious organization, and for the last few years has been experiencing a restlessness that may herald a new start for the *ulama*.

Despite almost 60 years of existence and a major role in contemporary Indonesian Islam, NU has not attracted the attention it deserves.<sup>15</sup> As a counter-reformist organization, it has been mostly presented to the outside world by its opponents. The image given was that of a reactionary, archaic (*kolot*) movement, led by Javanese *ulama* whose Islamic credentials were somewhat doubtful and tinted with syncretism. *Kiai* are often—though wrongly—perceived as the promoters of a "blind," sometimes superstitious faith because they support the principle of obedience (*taqlid*) to one of the four Sunni schools of law (*mazhab*) against the idea of freer interpretation (*ijtihad*) of the Koran and *hadith*. However, counter reforms are often reformations of reforms and rarely consist of a mere return to the *status quo ante*: Nahdatul Ulama was at first meant to resist Western-influenced modernism as conveyed by the Indonesian supporters of Djamal Uddin Al Afghani (1839-1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). In the process of opposing the Muhammadiyah type of modernism, NU somewhat reformed itself by eradicating a few heterodox and syncretic aspects of Javanese Islam. So that rather than traditionalist or reactionary, NU should better be termed orthodox.

However, after becoming a party under the Republic of Indonesia, NU's close and continuous relationship with government and its knack for political U-turns—it thrived through the three regimes of independent Indonesia—gave it a reputation for opportunism that was not undeserved and that its enemies did not fail to amplify and propagate. Among the latter, the foremost was the reformist Masyumi.

The two parties have had a long history of conflicts induced by the cleavage between Java, a traditional NU stronghold, and the Outer Islands, the Masyumi's major constituency. Philosophical differences and territorial oppositions first materialized when NU seceded from Masyumi in 1952<sup>16</sup> and started its own career as a political party. Relations kept worsening, and their political fortunes constantly drew them apart, until Masyumi was banned following the PRRI rebellion (1958-1960), while NU continued its collaboration with president Sukarno and survived without major problems the 1965-1967 change of government.

NU did even more than support the new regime at its inception: its Ansor youths took a very active part in the anti-Communist suppression by the end of 1965. In the first years of

<sup>15</sup> However Allan Samson gives valuable information on NU in "Conceptions of Politics, Power, and Ideology in Contemporary Indonesian Islam," in *Political Power and Communication in Indonesia*, ed. Karl D. Jackson and Lucian Pye (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 198-226. He insists that Western scholars only know NU through the unfavorable views of reformist Muslims. So far NU has failed to correct this negative image, and it still has little communication with non-Muslims.

<sup>16</sup> Set up in 1943 at the instigation of the Japanese, Masyumi brought together Muhammadiyah and NU, that is two basically opposed components. In 1945, Masyumi became a political party.

the New Order, NU was the only significant civilian force and was needed by the military—the Communist party had just been eliminated, the Nationalist party had been demoted, Masyumi was still banned, while Golkar had not yet been revived. NU's leader, Idham Chalid, was again made a minister. After a while, rather than a useful ally, NU soon became a nuisance, as a Muslim, non-*Pancasila* party. Perceived as backward and anti-modern, it also represented the old regime with which it had had a lasting relationship. Its *ulama* were not so malleable as they had a capacity to mobilize Java's rural masses, which could not be forcefully opposed by the *priai* unless they were ready to trigger violent conflicts. On top of that, one of NU's leaders, Z.E. Subchan, was increasingly vocal in his criticisms against the New Order.

To offset NU's influence, the New Order allowed the establishment of a rival party, Partai Muslimin Indonesia (known as Parmusi or PMI), as an heir to Masyumi. PMI was easily manageable, since its foundation (in 1968) and leadership had been approved by the government. PMI was modernist, in line with the developmental ideology of the New Order, and most of its members were hostile to NU. Furthermore, the existence of PMI fulfilled the demands of a part of the Islamic community.

Despite new competition from PMI, NU was able to gain 18.6 percent of the votes at the 1971 general election (while PMI only got 5.3 percent). The 1973 merger of the Islamic parties was a means to check NU's advance by associating it with its main rival that was closely supervised by the military. Another means was to exploit the dual aspect of NU, which had long helped it weather political changes, but could also become a weakness.

NU is divided into two bodies, the council of *syuriah* chaired by the *Rais Aam* and consisting of *ulama* who exert a remote control over its political executive, the *tanfidziyah*. The politicians (the *tanfidziyah* members) are in charge of routine affairs and can be part of the government or the civil service when needed. Such a division of labor is very efficient since it enabled NU to join spiritual prestige and political clout. Nahdatul Ulama could give the image of a party promoting religion and morality, while being part of the power establishment and participating in political games. Compromises and opportunism could be ascribed to politicians, so that the party's moral reputation could be kept unimpaired. In the 1970s, NU was still the institutional association of religion and politics, a formidable formula when it worked; as long as the *ulama* and their politicians could maintain their solidarity, NU remained strong. On the contrary, any dissension between its two basic components would weaken it deeply.

As the hard core of anti-government protest inside PPP was NU, while inside NU the identity hard core was the *ulama* group, the military tried to keep the latter in check by exerting pressure on NU's politicians, by nature more amenable. This strategy was adopted in the aftermath of the 1977 general election, when Golkar's performance had not been as good as in 1971 (60 percent instead of 62 percent), while PPP had achieved some progress, which was worrying for the government. To further weaken the NU component inside PPP, PMI's undue supremacy had to be amplified, and this was done with John Naro's help.

John Naro was already well known for the controversial role he played at the time the military first tried to mold PMI according to their wishes. A former attorney and member of KASI—the nominally Islamic Action Front of Intellectuals (1967)<sup>17</sup>—Naro had sat in the

<sup>17</sup> Kesatuan Aksi Sarjana Indonesia, an active supporter of the New Order, was established in 1966, following the KAMI Student Front pattern. On John Naro, see his biography in *Apa dan Siapa, sejumlah orang Indonesia* (Indonesia's *Who's who*), (Jakarta: Grafiti, 1984), 1170 pages, p. 550.

*Gotong Royong* Parliament from 1968 to 1971 with the pro-government Karya Pembangunan group that was to evolve into Golkar later on. While still holding this position, he was promoted to PMI's board and became its general chairman for a few months, following an internal "coup." Provisionally expelled from PMI, he was nevertheless appointed as one of PPP's chairmen, when the new party was formed in 1973.

So as a close associate of the military, in 1978 Naro was promoted to the position of PPP's general chairman. He soon started to reduce NU's role in PPP by picking a majority of PMI members as candidates for the 1982 general election. NU then threatened to leave PPP if it did not get more candidates from its own ranks. In January 1982, the young Abdurrahman Wahid, grandson of NU's founder, even suggested that NU not only leave PPP but focus and limit its activities to nonpolitical affairs, as had been the case before World War II. Naro was not impressed, and delivered the list of PPP candidates unchanged (i.e. heavily dominated by PMI people) to the chairman of the election committee, Amirmachmud, the then home minister.

In the May 4, 1982 general election, PPP recorded a setback with only 27.8 percent of the votes (compared to 29.4 percent in 1977), despite an aggressive campaign climaxing in the Jakarta March 18, 1982 riots.<sup>18</sup> Most of its elected MPs were members of the PMI faction.

Two days before the election (May 2, 1982), dissension between NU politicians and *ulama* had become apparent: Four well-known and venerable *kiai*<sup>19</sup> went to Idham Chalid, and asked him to resign. After 26 years as NU's leader, Idham Chalid was the archetypical NU politician who prospered under the old order as the new one. The *ulama* pointed out his age and his fragile health, but actually they were blaming the tremendous concessions made to John Naro, which had cost NU dearly, while he had had the means as the "President" of PPP (not to be confused with *Ketua umum*, general chairman) to better defend NU's stance. Idham Chalid first agreed to offer his resignation but took back this agreement on May 14, 1982, when NU's apparatus (politicians, maneuvered by the military?) refused to approve his resignation, on the grounds it was not compatible with the articles of association.

From this incident on, the breach between politicians and *ulama* was almost beyond repair and paralyzed NU until the August 1984 PPP convention, when there was a total debacle. John Naro was able to consolidate his hold over PPP and have it adhere to *Pancasila*.

All through the preceding months, the quarrel had developed between Idham Chalid's *Cipete group*, named from a Jakarta district where NU has its headquarters, and the *ulama* the *Situbondo group*, from the name of a large East Java *pesantren*. Ironically, and out of political finesse, the government had not authorized NU to hold its 27th national convention until its two factions reconciled:<sup>20</sup> the idea was to maintain the image of the government as working for the unification of Islam, even though it was taking advantage of its divisions. Thanks to Abdurrahman Wahid, reconciliation took place in September 1984, following the PPP convention,<sup>21</sup> and NU was eventually allowed to have its own convention

<sup>18</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *Political Parties in the 1982 General Election in Indonesia* (1982), 81 p.

<sup>19</sup> K.H. As'ad Syamsul Arifin, K.H. Machrus Ali, K.H. Ali Ma'sum (*Rais Aam* since 1981), and K.H. Masykur. See Idham Chalid's biography in *Apa dan Siapa*, p. 141.

<sup>20</sup> *Tempo*, February 18, 1984, "Rujuk dulu, baru Muktamar [Reconcile first and then have a convention]."

<sup>21</sup> *Tempo*, September 8, 1984, used a significant title: "Rujuk setelah terbantai [Reconciliation after a massacre]." The massacre was that suffered by NU and especially the *ulama* group at the August 1984 PPP convention where they had very few representatives.

by the end of 1984. On that occasion, *Pancasila* was officially adopted by NU as its sole principle.

However, the weakening of NU politicians inside PPP and NU's internal discord had an unexpected effect, that is, the new assertiveness of NU *ulama*, as formulated during their National Conference (*Musyawarah Nasional*) held in Situbondo from the December 18 to 21, 1983.<sup>22</sup> The meeting took place at the large East Java *pondok pesantren*, under the guidance of the venerable As'ad Syamsul Arifin, 86, a *kiai* said to be a descendent of Sunan Ampel, one of the nine apostles of Islam in Java. Besides, *Kiai* As'ad is related to a number of *pesantren* masters throughout East Java and Madura. Right in the middle of the quarrel dividing NU ranks, the *ulama* group was gathering to reassert its authority over the movement, but also to define a new line that was to herald their renaissance and reflect the revival of Islamic faith.

The place for the meeting, a *pesantren*, was quite significant, since for the first time in 43 years the *ulama's* National Conference convened in the precincts of a Koranic boarding school. This was a symbol, a return to the initial tradition of those educational settlements that played a large role in propagating Islam, and not so long ago still showed a reserve, if not declared hostility, toward the government. And the 500 *ulama* gathered in Situbondo actually stated their intent to quit the field of conventional party politics to come back to 1926 sources: NU had to go back to the line of struggle (*khittah*) it was pursuing when it was founded, and again become a basically social religious organization, where the *ulama* of the *syuriyah* (deliberative council) would hold power over the *tanfidziyah* (executive), that is, over the NU politicians. NU was to go through a new period of glory (*kejayaan*) and a new awakening of the "*ulama*" by means of political activity held at the bottom level rather than only at the top of society.

The conclusions of the conference were clear: power inside NU belongs to the *kiai* as founders, leaders, and guides of the *nahdliyyin* (NU members). It must rest with a "government of *kiai*" or inspired by them. *Ulama* also decided that members of the NU leadership would not be allowed to hold leading positions in any political party (read PPP).

The more aggressive attitude of the *ulama* must not be seen as seditious—they even went so far as to accept *Pancasila* as their sole principle.<sup>23</sup> It rather reflected a new self-confidence and a reaction against government interference, as well as a genuine desire for "regeneration." Would-be *kiai* Abdurrahman Wahid, who played an intensive role in Situbondo, and later in reconciling the two NU factions, is a symbol of the tentative new mood. He was a very strong candidate for one of the higher positions in NU at the convention planned for December 1984. "Able to dialog" (*sanggup berdialog*) with New Order leaders, which matters a great deal because NU must remain able to "talk" to power holders, Abdurrahman Wahid is a young intellectual born in Jombang 44 years ago, who studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. A direct heir to NU tradition but with a democratic reputation, he is the grandson of K.H. Hasyim Asjari, a founder of NU, while his father, A. Wahid Hasyim, was a minister of religious affairs; if he was to take over the leadership of NU, then the "family tradition" of the movement would be secured. As required by custom, Abdurrahman Wahid leads a *pesantren*; but contrary to tradition, he set it up in town, in the capital

<sup>22</sup> *Tempo*, December 24, 1983, "Dari Asembagus, mencari kejayaan kembali [Starting from Asembagus, in search of a new glory]," and "Kalau NU ingin berjaya [If NU wants to be successful]."

<sup>23</sup> *Tempo*, December 31, 1983, "Munas NU: Asas tunggal akhirnya halal [NU conference: The Sole Principle is eventually rightful]."

city,<sup>24</sup> and not off the beaten track like in the past. This is an indication of the will shared by a number of *ulama* to get closer to urban *ummat*. The world and the *ummat* require them to do so anyway, and Wahid's attitude is a way to address a demand which, if unfulfilled, would seek and find its own original, syncretic—uncontrollable—ways and means.

### 5. Pop Islam

So far, not much has been said about the community of believers in its ordinary dimension. One major protagonist in the drama involving the New Order and Islam has hardly been discussed, or only between the lines, almost as a mere setting. Rather than as an actor, the *ummat* was mentioned more as a stake in the dispute between *priai* and *kiai*, as an object of their self-seeking solicitude. The common people were seen to arise during the Tanjung Priok affair, with inescapable violence, but unclear direction. Who are they? As Indonesian perceptions tend to contrast elites (*pemimpin*) and the mass of those who do not lead anything (the people), they can be best identified as the "Muslim people," *rakyat muslimin*. Beyond elite games and politics, the *wong cilik* (small people) are the main locus for the Islamic revival; the Muslim rank and file who crowd mosques but will never become *haji* deserve specific attention. These usually silent Muslims should be considered *per se*, as a rather autonomous lot, and not necessarily as the respective clienteles of conventional elites. It must be admitted, however, that little is known about them.

General elections do not give much information since they only indicate the variation of clienteles and patronage. What are the reasons for, and the variation of, faith intensity? Observers are usually taken by surprise at the recurring outbursts of religious fervor. What is the meaning of increased recourse to Islam, what does it reflect? Social economic frustrations can be easily assumed, as well as the impact of cultural uneasiness induced by the permeation of external values; conversely, the religious fraternity appeals to and comforts people by providing new solidarity networks. Surveys and studies are still rare on this point.<sup>25</sup> The only obvious fact is that mosques are packed, that around them (especially minor ones) a system of parallel socialization develops in competition with that provided by the New Order government. A network based on mosque leaders and infrastructures is at work.

Many mosque complexes include facilities supporting not only religious activity, but also cultural promotion and daily politics: clinics, dormitories, canteens, shops, printing workshops, libraries, sports equipment, etc. These *pesantren*-like complexes are used by young people on the occasion of Koran reading or of lectures given by famous preachers (*mubalig*). What is being said there? As public statements, Friday sermons are closely scrutinized by government officials.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See A. Wahid's biography in *Apa dan Siapa...*, p. 1108.

<sup>25</sup> Such surveys, when available, are not entirely satisfactory as their sampling may be too limited. See Joseph B. Tamney, "Functional Religiosity and Modernization in Indonesia," *Sociological Analysis, A Journal in the Sociology of Religion* 44, 1 (Spring 1980): 55–65.

<sup>26</sup> The government sees to it that mosques are organized. In 1972, based on official suggestions, an Indonesian Council of Mosques was set up (*Dewan Masjid Indonesia*), which federates mosque associations. Its task is to coordinate activities, to propagate the Koran, to train *khatib* (preachers), to organize seminars on mosque architecture, resilience, etc., and to convey government views. The council can make proposals: it suggested the establishment of the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (1975) and played a role in the debate on the marriage bill (1973).

A possible way to assess small people's Islam would be to consider visible examples that can help identify an Islamic "little tradition." This indirect approach is helpful in understanding mentalities, and two cases can be briefly reported here, that of the Islamic pop singer, Rhoma Irama, and the phenomenon of the "scientific Koran."

Rhoma Irama (the name by itself is a syncretic feat: *Raden* [a Javanese nobility title] *Haji Oma*, Irama [rhythm]) has succeeded in achieving a synthesis between popular Islam and Rock 'n roll music: The "knight of faith propagation" (*satria dakwah*), the "king from below" (*raja dari bawah*)<sup>27</sup> expresses popular Islam through heavy-rhythm songs (*dangdut*). A superstar credited with over 15 million young fans (*penggemar*), he is used to starting his concerts with a few verses from the Koran, and in his songs he blends romance and pleas for social justice, ballads, and Islamic precepts. A social phenomenon, Rhoma Irama followed an initiatory career that became a legend through movies. His beginnings are worth recording. Born in 1946 in Tasikmalaya from a noble Sundanese family, he decided after finishing high school to go to the Tebuireng *pesantren* in Jombang, East Java (the cradle of Nahdatul Ulama) in order to improve his religious knowledge. He ran away from home with his younger brother, but for lack of money he stopped in Solo, the heartland of Central Java. To survive, he became a street singer (*pengamen*), but he was soon helped out of destitution by a tattooed man (that is, according to a stereotype, an outlaw). Shortly before the 1965 coup, he came to Jakarta and started his musical career.

Today, Rhoma Irama leads the life of a pious Muslim. His children study the Koran (*mengaji*), he learns Arabic from a private religious teacher (*ustad*), and his home replicates the atmosphere of a *pesantren*. He gives very generous alms, holds an open table, and pays as much *zakat* as taxes to the government. His musicians, the Soneta Group, are required to be good Muslims, and Islam is increasingly present in his music: his band, *The Sound of Islam*, is about to be given a new name, "*Haji Sembilan*" [The Nine Pilgrims] as a reminder of the *Wali Songo*, the Nine Apostles who, says Rhoma Irama, Islamized Java by use of *wayang* and *gamelan*.

Such a good Muslim, with more supporters than any Indonesian party has members, necessarily has been involved in politics. Since 1971, he has supported Muslim parties. In 1977 and even more so in 1982, he campaigned for the PPP. At a huge political meeting in March 1982 where he presented his show, incidents burst out among the audience, causing several casualties. However, after the August 1984 convention, Rhoma Irama withdrew his support from the PPP, which he defined as a "transvestite" (*banci*), and gave an assessment of political Islam that would not have been disapproved of by an *ulama*: PPP did not reflect Islam's aspirations any longer, and was only a place for power bickering. For an Islamic party to accept *Pancasila* as a sole principle was a loss of identity. It was a mistake to sacrifice religion and forget that priority is given to Allah and His message. Rhoma Irama predicted that PPP would get into serious trouble at the 1987 elections; until then, he saw an "apathy" among Muslims and "frustrations" that would brutally burst out since they had no channel (*saluran*) left to express their aspirations.<sup>28</sup> Some three weeks after Rhoma's statements, the Tanjung Priok events strangely echoed his analysis. The "Muslim beat" singer is not permitted to go on the air at TVRI, the State television station. Besides, the

<sup>27</sup> "Satria dakwah, raja dari bawah," is the fine title of the article devoted to Rhoma Irama by *Tempo*, June 30, 1984, which is extensively used in the following lines.

<sup>28</sup> Comments made by Rhoma Irama and reported by *Tempo*, August 25, 1984 in "Ini partai, bukannya komplotan [This is a party, not a conspiracy]."



Indonesian Council of *Ulama* (MUI) issued a ruling (*fatwa*) banning (*mengharamkan*) the singing of Koranic verses to swinging tunes.

The second phenomenon reflecting effervescence in grassroots Islam and confusion in people's minds is somehow related to the first one as it uses the same means of communication, i.e. magnetic tape cassettes. This media is closely checked by the government, as it was widely used by Imam Khomeini, when he lived in Neauphle le Château before returning to Iran. However the Indonesian cassettes have no political content, but, rather, a didactic or apologetic tenor, including "religious lessons" (*kuliah agama*) giving a "scientific" interpretation of the Koran. Sold by the tens of thousands through an underground network, these cassettes were banned and seized by the government in March 1984 upon request of the Indonesian Council of *Ulama* (MUI). The religious teachings that were so propagated aimed to reassure believers disturbed by modern scientific progress. Far from contesting the Koran, such was the implicit argument, Western science only supports it.

According to a lesson entitled "Divine Unity and logics" (*Tauhid dan logika*), the prophet Adam was created by God from a meteor, and became himself an asteroid, which enabled him to move to the earth with his companion. "By divine grace, he was saved from the effect of friction during his travel as he was protected by air molecules, so that he could breathe while flying throughout space." The rationalization technique used here consists of relating all supernatural aspects to outer space. In "Ka'bah and planet earth magnetism" (*Ka'bah dan magnet bumi*), we are told how the earth poles shifted by 68 degrees following a comet attack against the solar system, which upset the axis of all planets; before this incident, the north pole was located right at the Ka'bah (the central shrine of Islam) in Mecca, and the south pole in the Tuamotu islands (!) in the Pacific ocean, etc.<sup>29</sup>

The author of this creative thinking is Naswar Syamsu, an obscure, retired policeman, originally from West Sumatra. Trained in a Dutch school, he studied astronomy (*ilmu falak*) from a Bukittinggi Sheikh. During a retreat into the jungle with the PRRI guerillas, Nazwar Syamsu had forebodings and received the revelation of his mission, which was to defend the true faith against the encroachments of science. Until his death (1983), he conceived and propagated heterodox views that were meant to strengthen fundamentalism: to those who read the Koran by the letter, they would bring scientific certainty as to the perfect truth of the Book.

Despite its relative success, such an attempt, if it was uncommon, would have limited significance. However a whole corpus of similar literature has been recently developing; it is abundant, but its influence is unknown although it is probably rather wide, and its authors are as diverse as for instance a professor of Islamic Law at Universitas Indonesia or a former Tebuireng (Jombang) *santri*. The former tried to measure the distance between the earth and the throne of Allah (*Arasy*), which according to the Koran was traveled by angels made of light in one thousand years (32:5); the distance would then be one thousand light-years, a modern and scientific measurement unit implied by the Koran. In an almanac entitled "The Solar System according to the Divine System" (*Tata surya menurut sistim Ilahiyah*), the Tebuireng *santri* proved that the number of days in a week should be six in conformity with the time needed to create the earth according to the Koran, and that Saturday is an unnecessary day, an interpolation due to "Jewish influence." Because of the seven-day week, thousands (only?) of Fridays were "lost," as well as Friday sermons.

<sup>29</sup> *Tempo*, March 24, 1984, "Sebermula adalah meteor [In the beginning was a meteor]."

While some are trying to make the Koran "scientific" or compatible with the teachings of modern science, others want to stick to it strictly. Since mid-1983, various fundamentalist Koranic study groups have claimed to reject any text other than the Book. The reason for this is simple: Allah is supernatural (*gaib*) and the Messenger is dead. The only source is the Koran that contains Allah's and His Messenger's words. The so-called *hadith* are only legends transmitted from mouth to ear. This doctrine, supposedly originating in Klaten (Central Java), was most popular among the working class. The "Sunnah-rejecting" (*Inkarus-sunnah*) movement was banned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.<sup>30</sup>

These symptoms are mere illustrations of the revival of popular faith which spontaneously evolves toward syncretic or fundamentalist forms. The government continuously strives to control unbridled syncretism for fear of its political consequences; by doing so, it also gives the official *ulama* and defenders of the Islamic faith some satisfaction. On the whole, persecuting instinctive and often naive expressions of popular faith, combined with *pancasila*-ization of the State and political containment lay the grounds for Islamic radicalism. While the government claims to prevent and fight violence, the impression is that it provokes it through an excess of precautions, let alone security psychosis. The government arouses what it fears, unwillingly but also perhaps deliberately, for Islamic unrest may serve the New Order by legitimizing its existence when security is endangered.

## 6. The Mirage of the Islamic Revolution

Violent Islamic protest thrives on fertile ground when the community is bewildered. However, determined proponents of violence are a very small minority that seeks under certain circumstances to mobilize its environment, by exploiting social economic discrepancies and obstacles to political Islam, as well as inter-ethnic or racial strife.

Islamic activists are often young people, who organize around worship places in popular urban districts. Unemployment may induce some of them to take part in violent actions. As they have forced leisure time, they can more easily engage in underground militancy through the network of small mosques. Radicals aim to suppress the *Pancasila* State by force and replace it with an Islamic State, the shape of which is not clearly defined. As they cannot convince all Muslims to accept total Islamization of public life, they are ready to resort to armed struggle, namely terrorism.

Beyond harassment by the New Order, activists are stimulated by foreign models offered by various Islamic countries with a political regime approximating theocracy, including Iran and its Islamic revolution. However, their effect is not easy to prove, even if the government tried to explain Islamic terrorism as a consequence of the dissemination of Khomeini's ideas in Indonesia. The easy argument of a plot fomented from abroad or more simply of an international underground conspiracy is often put forward to account for internal, locally based phenomena. In fact, the authorities carefully—though not always efficiently—control links between the *ummat* and the Middle East like the pilgrimage, or information on the Iranian revolution, which was tightly filtered in the Indonesian press in 1979 and 1980.

While external models may influence Islamic radicals to some extent, the major factor seems to be the local history of armed struggle to establish an Islamic state, as it developed

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., "Ingkar Sunnah atau ingkar apa [To reject Sunnah—traditional sayings of the Prophet—, or reject what else?]."

from 1945, parallel and in opposition to the republican movement. The Darul Islam uprising was active in West Java, Aceh, and South Celebes until its main leader, Kartosuwirjo was arrested in 1960. Under the New Order, Muslim radicals have continued the same struggle, some even being its direct heirs as was the case with two of Kartosuwirjo's sons. Both of them were on trial in 1982 for having set up an underground movement named "New Style Indonesian Islamic State," active from 1970 to 1977. According to the government, the movement included a secret army led by guerrilla officers under a Commander-in-chief (*Panglima*) and an *Imam*. As a defense plea, Kartosuwirjo's sons claimed to have acted on behalf of Bakin, the intelligence agency, by recruiting former Islamic rebels to help the government fight Communists. In the official version, it was admitted that after their amnesty in 1962 some former members of the Darul Islam movement had indeed been rehabilitated by the *Pancasila* Republic, but that they had taken advantage of it to reconstitute a banned organization.<sup>31</sup>

Kartosuwirjo's posterity in the New Order is wide. The "Father of the Proclamation of the Indonesian Islamic State" (*Bapak Proklamasi Negara Islam Indonesia*), as he was named by a fundamentalist magazine,<sup>32</sup> still inspires a lot of his former followers who proselytize among the younger generation. For instance, a terrorist group led by Timzar Zubil claimed to revive Darul Islam through a series of bombings perpetrated in Medan in 1976. The targets were symbolic: bombs were thrown at an expensive hotel, a night-club, a methodist church, and a movie theater. The group was arrested.

From 1978 to 1981, a "Holy War Command" (*Komando Jihad*) murdered several people and attacked various targets, until its leader, a former Darul Islam member, Wardiman, was killed in a police raid.

More serious seemed to be the case of the Imron Group that claimed to be the military arm of a Council of the Indonesian Islamic Revolution (*Dewan Revolusi Islam Indonesia*), with alleged but not proven links with Iran. After a spectacular attack on a police post in Bandung, the group hijacked a Garuda plane to Bangkok. However the five hijackers were killed and the plane recovered by special forces sent over from Indonesia. Imron was arrested and executed.<sup>33</sup>

On the whole, Islamic terrorism in the 1970s and the early 1980s remained rather marginal, since it could never trigger mass mobilization, let alone a revolution. But it was endemic, as new groups repeatedly emerged, always pursuing the establishment of an Islamic State, unified or separate as in Aceh (*Aceh Merdeka*), or in Celebes (*Republik Federasi Sulawesi*, with former followers of Kahar Muzakkar, a local Kartosuwirjo ally).

Should the Tanjung Priok events be regarded as part of these various attempts? The answer is ambivalent, as the Jakarta harbor riots, despite their fundamentalist tone, did not aim to set up an Islamic State. But there clearly was a feeling of hostility against secular authority perceived as encroaching daily on Islam and supporting the Chinese. And the binding factor, the emotional catalyst, was indeed Islam.

<sup>31</sup> *Tempo*, December 24, 1983, "Mengadili para pewaris [Judging (Kartosuwirjo's) heirs]."

<sup>32</sup> This semi underground magazine, *Al Ikhwan* [Brothers] was recently banned. Published by the Coordinating Body of Mosque Youth (*Badan Kordinasi Pemuda Masjid* or BKPM—!), *Al Ikhwan* printed as many as 20,000 copies and was distributed all over Indonesia. Its last issue (March 1984) contained a panegyric of Al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and an article entitled "Pancasila, berhala menghalang Islam [Pancasila, the idol that hinders Islam]." See *Tempo*, May 26, 1984, "Persaudaraan lewat bulletin [Fraternity through a bulletin]."

<sup>33</sup> On the chronology of Islamic terrorism in Indonesia, see *Tempo*, October 13, 1984, "Dari granat di Cikini sampai bom di BCA [From the Cikini grenades to the BCA bombs]."

The apparent difference with 1970s Islamic violence was that in 1984 Islamic radicals seemed to have gained a small measure of popular support. Islamic terrorism seemed to better adjust to Muslim demands and sensitivity. Shortly after the Tanjung Priok riots, on October 4, 1984 a bank was bombed in Jakarta. The target was carefully chosen—Bank Central Asia (BCA), owned by a Chinese, the richest of them all, Liem Sioe Liong, a close associate of the New Order top leader. This was undoubtedly efficient symbolism, and quite appealing to Muslim public opinion. Besides, the link between the BCA attack and the Tanjung Priok riots may have been rather direct, as asserted by some sources,<sup>34</sup> since the main actors in both events, namely Amir Biki and Rachmat Basoeeki, were friends and members of the same Ka'bah Youth Movement (*Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah*). Set up shortly before the 1982 elections and meant to mobilize votes for PPP, this organization strongly denied involvement in the events. To "avenge" the death of his friend Amir Biki, Rachmat Basoeeki was alleged to have organized the BCA bombings. Previously he had been involved in the March 20, 1978 bombing of the People's Assembly building, together with the Islamic Revolutionary Struggle group (*Perjuangan Revolusioner Islam*). As already mentioned, the Assembly was then about to approve a text putting Javanese *kebatihan* mysticism on a par with monotheistic faiths, to the great discontent of Muslims.

## 7. Conclusion?

Confusion, ambiguousness, and manipulation have continuously characterized the relationship between the New Order and Islam. It is a relation difficult to clarify, even over a period of some 20 years. Despite their antagonism, the two orders share common goals, as both strive to gain more faith and more power. The line between secular and spiritual realms is not easy to draw, assuming it can be done, especially as these two fields are equally coveted by two competing forces with a propensity toward absolutism for one, and absoluteness for the other.

Despite an early alliance, the New Order and Islam soon split. The anti-Communist compact could not survive the dramatic suppression of the common enemy. Common interests that seemed to bind the military and Muslim entrepreneurs or landowners in the mid-1960s eventually diverged: Muslims were soon overrun by foreign capital called in by the government and undermined by the emerging middle class that is still one of the regime's main pillars.<sup>35</sup>

More important, the primary opposition between social cultural attitudes sharpened over time: the *priai* side of the officers increasingly collided with *kiai* modes of perception. There was not only a confrontation of two cultures, but also of two rival leaderships, i.e. Javanese military bureaucrats and spiritual Muslim leaders.

While these conventional elites were vying over the allegiance of the faithful called on to take sides and choose between *Pancasila* or the True Faith, or both of them, popular masses confused by social differentiation and cultural modernization were being seduced by fundamentalism, a refuge valued as early as the 1970s. The new *ulama* are monitoring this trend which can give them new clout provided they adjust to it and leave the malignancy of conventional politics.

<sup>34</sup> *Tempo*, November 3, 1984, "Mereka dengan bom di tangan [Those with a bomb in hand]."

<sup>35</sup> On the middle class, see my "Les classes moyennes en Indonésie, opacités culturelles et réalités économiques," *Tiers Monde* 26, 101 (January–March 1985): 207–18.

Fundamentalism also brought back into motion former outcasts in Republican history, i.e. proponents of a stern Islamic State; they have emerged again, and found followers among the younger generation. Can they, will they, forge an alliance with the *ulama*?

Most probably the future could belong to the new middle class generated by rapid economic growth under the New Order. Are these groups really pro-*pancasila*, or are they likely to surrender to the wave of Islamic revival that also affects some of their members?

Meanwhile, power holders are watchful. In the aftermath of the September and October incidents, they were full of consideration for the *ummat*. Generals visited villages where they were seen wearing a *kupiah* and a sarong, the dressing insignia of popular Islam. They would go to mosques, pray, preach, and display great piety. They made trips to *pesantren* to reassure people and call for moderation. General Try Sutrisno, commander of the Jakarta military region (KODAM) and a former *santri*, was often seen in Koran reading sessions. The military meant to reconcile with Islam (*bersilaturahmi*), and to reduce misgivings. "No *kiai* has been arrested," they said. *Pancasila* was not Islam's enemy.<sup>36</sup>

As on similar past occasions, they tried to appease the *ulama* and the *ummat*. So far, they have always succeeded in doing so, at least until they resume their containment policy, then taking the risk of another Islamic implosion.

November 1984.

#### Seven years later (*post scriptum*)

The imbroglio goes on. In 1990, the first Association of Muslim Intellectuals ever in Indonesia was set up. It was quite a feat since, except for Abdurrahman Wahid who has become the chairman of the NU *tanfidziyah*, every shade of Islam was represented in the new organization, from fundamentalist to extreme modernist. Initiative came from below, but the organization sought approval from the Palace. Without second thoughts, president Soeharto gave his blessings to such a unified intellectuals' association, as he had been looking for Islamic support for the last few years. The new association was established with B.J. Habibie, the modernizing technologist, as its chairman. A few months later, president Soeharto made the pilgrimage to Mecca (June 1991).

In one of the latest improvements to the New Order, the Islamic dimension was being restored. Islam is part of Indonesia, the head of state is every citizen's president; he himself is a good Muslim, besides being a convinced Javanese (he has not abandoned his Javaneness, see *Wejangan Pak Harto*). Politics and heaven have to integrate all available dimensions to provide the best security. A new syncretic alliance between *santri*-ized (Islamized) *priai* and *priai*-ed *kiai* was being designed, in the context of the forthcoming general (1992) and presidential (1993) elections. Toward the presidential succession and the possible end of the New Order, the tendency was like a replay of the beginning: a self-confident and lonely Javanese general approaching the *ummat*, in search of a new political ally to face potential rivals, and to gain an ultimate legitimacy. Having acquired a new maturity and in search of a new dignity, political Islam seemed to be ready to play the game. The circle was coming to a close.

July 1991.

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<sup>36</sup> *Tempo*, October 27, 1984, "Mencoba melawan Yuwaswisu [Trying to fight anxiety]."